



'Luas works hurt Black Santa appeal but Shane Ross never replied to letter' - Archbishop of Dublin

This year's Black Santa appeal has seen contributions halved. This is being blamed on Luas works barriers which make crossing

Dawson Street to St Ann's Church in the heart of the capital nearly impossible.

Organisers of the appeal, who are based at St Ann's Church, have said the footfall is significantly lower this year.

Church of Ireland Archbishop Michael Jackson wrote to Mr Ross, but he received no response.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, Archbishop Jackson said: "It is a full week since I, on behalf of the Black Santa Appeal at St Ann's Church, Dawson Street, delivered to Leinster House and for the attention of the Minister for Transport, a letter requesting that he intervene in the issues around access to the forecourt of the church.

"There has been no response from the minster or from the minister's office to my request.

"Trying to cross the road is like an obstacle course - the problem is you actually can't see how you can get to the front of St Ann's if you are coming from Grafton Street.

"The people of Dublin have over successive years been extremely generous. They see joy on the streets and they want to respond. The problem for us is that the appeal is a once-a-year

opportunity to enable people give and distribute money to a range of charities."

Admitting that at this stage, it seems that there will be no response from the minister or his department, Archbishop Jackson appealed to those who will be in Dublin city centre today and in the vicinity of Dawson Street to "make a little extra effort and to avail of the opportunity to give to a wide range of charitable causes by crossing the road to St Ann's Church and supporting the Black Santa Appeal".

"Last year, we raised a record-breaking €40,000 and as things stand this year, we are at no more than 50pc of this figure. Any donation, small or large, will greatly be welcomed and appreciated," the archbishop said.

He said the Church of Ireland was not "at loggerheads with anybody", and he paid tribute to Luas authorities who had been tremendously helpful to St Ann's in facilitating access to funerals at other times.

However, it is understood that St Ann's vicar, Canon David Gillespie, was assured last October the Luas barriers would be gone in time for Christmas week.

Meanwhile, the head of the Anglican Church in Ireland hit out at the absence of "creative and compassionate joined-up thinking" on homelessness.

Dr Jackson said people realised that the Apollo House initiative would not continue for the long term and it would be closed down.

"But for those who are recipients of warmth and care and some kind of holistic thinking around their needs for a short period, it is at least a start and it offers a challenge," he said.

Being homeless is "terrifying and degrading", he said - as he stressed Irish society was seeing types of homelessness it never thought it would see.

The father of one expressed concern for families who will have to spend Christmas in a hotel room, describing it as a "waking nightmare" from which parents "get no rest".

"These parents are wondering, can it be any different next year or will it be more of this? All of that is painful. I would have thought that in the regular expectation of life in Ireland - this is not sufficient," he said.

Artist captures Belfast's Black Santa sit-out



Artist Ray Elwood draws the Rev Canon Mark Taylor.

Black Santa has been recorded on camera many times over the decades, but this is the first time, we think, that the sit-out has been captured by an artist.

Ray Elwood, artist and tutor and a member of the Ulster Watercolour Society, came along to do a charcoal picture for display at his own club, Dundonald Art Club.

He selected the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, rector of Whitehead and Islandmagee as his subject.

Ray will now add colour to finish it off, ready for display.

Thursday last was a busy day on the steps of St Anne's. Dean John Mann did an interview with Frank Mitchell on U105 this morning, then another interview with Nicola Weir for Friday's Stephen Nolan show and Nicola also recorded some of the wonderful concert presented by Cathedral Lay Clerk Mark Tilley as part of the cathedral's Christmas Cracker series. You can watch part of Mark's concert on [YouTube](#).

The Dean's total is climbing, which includes some incredibly large donations. The dry weather encouraged people to come and say hello.

Two Bishops Make Traditional Christmas Appearance on Highland Radio

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good, and the Bishop of Raphoe, Bishop Philip Boyce, have made their now traditional joint



appearance on Highland Radio's Shaun Doherty Christmas Show.

The festive programme was broadcast live from An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny.

Bishop Good said it was great to see his counterpart looking so well following his recent heart surgery and wished him continuing good health.

Bishop Good spoke to the audiences – at home and in the theatre – about the Diocese's Year of Opportunity, which has been focusing on three themes: mission, children and generosity. He said Christmas was a time for generosity.

The Bishop remarked on the front page of that day's Irish Times newspaper, which showed thousands of people queueing up outside the Capuchin Centre in Dublin to collect food parcels. There was loud applause when Bishop Good thanked those organisations – church-based and others – for their generosity in caring for the less fortunate. He said Christians had a duty to be generous to people in need.

Memorial fund-raiser for Tandragee church member tops 52K

Ballymore Parish Church was packed to capacity on Sunday 4th December for a special Charity Carol Service in loving memory of Alison Williamson.

Poyntzpass Silver Band was joined by Tandragee Primary School Choir and the Parish Choir for what was a very poignant and moving occasion.

Alison, who died earlier this year after a long and courageous battle with blood cancer, was a dearly loved wife, mother and friend, a member of Ballymore and a classroom assistant in the Primary School. During the Service one of the



Lessons was read by Mya Williamson (12), Alison's daughter.

The Rector, Canon Shane Forster, in his sermon talked about Alison's life, love and legacy. He said, "Those of us who knew Alison and loved her have shed many tears in these last six and a half months for we miss her terribly and yet when we remember her and the character that she was, we cannot but smile. She was an exceptional and truly gifted human being. She had great faith and determination and inspired people with her warmth and kindness. She was always thinking of others." Canon Forster went on to say that Alison has left an amazing legacy.

“I see Alison in her children, in Mya and Rhys, also in her husband Barry who is a truly remarkable individual. Despite his own personal deep sorrow and pain, he has remained strong for the children and has drawn on Alison’s strength and courage.

With the help, support and encouragement of his family and friends, church, school and wider community, he has raised a phenomenal amount of money for Leukaemia and Lymphoma NI through different fund raising events but particularly by his 4 peaks challenge. With his two brothers, cousin and six friends, the highest mountains in the UK were conquered in 48 hours! Tens of thousands of pounds, have now been raised in memory of Alison, which will make a massive contribution towards funding research into the causes of blood cancers and better treatments for them. Hopefully one day that research will also bring about a cure for the disease as well. So by Barry’s endeavours Alison is still making a difference in the world and in the lives of other people and will continue to do so for many, many years to come.”

The collection during the Service which was for Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI came to £1,500.

At a reception in the Parish Hall following the Service all the money raised in memory of Alison in the last six months was presented by Barry to representatives of the charity – a grand total of £52,115-07. An amazing tribute to an inspirational young woman.

Pope Francis creates commission to investigate Order of Malta crisis

Pope Francis has appointed a high-powered commission to investigate a sacking at the Order of Malta, a lay order founded in the 11th century.

The order's grand chancellor, Albrecht von Boeselager, was forcibly ousted earlier this month after the Order of Malta said "an extremely grave and untenable situation" came to light. Italian daily Il Messaggero said the scandal concerned von Boeselager's tenure as health minister and claims that he didn't prevent the order's workers in Africa from distributing condoms.

The order has not provided details, but said the scandal involved von Boeselager's tenure as



Pope Francis exchanges gifts with Fra' Matthew Festing, the 79th prince and grand master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

health minister and said he had concealed the problems until an internal investigation uncovered them last year.

The Pope named Fr Gianfranco Ghirlanda, a top Jesuit canon lawyer, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's former UN ambassador to Geneva and several senior Order of Malta members to "quickly inform the Holy See" about the scandal.

Calls to the Order of Malta seeking details were not immediately returned.

The scandal appears to have deeply divided the knights, who trace their history to the 11th century with the establishment of an infirmary in Jerusalem that cared for pilgrims to the Holy Land.

In a press release after von Boeselager's ousting, the order appealed for members to not abandon ship and remain united.

BBC acknowledges falsely accusing wartime Church of 'silence'

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has acknowledged that it incorrectly accused the Catholic Church of failing to speak out or act against the persecution of Jews in Europe during World War II.

During a BBC news broadcast in July, covering Pope Francis' visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp, a reporter stated: "Silence was the response of the Catholic Church when Nazi Germany demonised Jewish people and then attempted to eradicate Jews from Europe." The statement led to a complaint from Lord David

Alton, a noted advocate for Christians in Britain, and Fr Leo Chamberlain, a Benedictine and historian. A formal complaint to the Editorial Complaints Unit (ECU) followed after what Lord Alton said were “several unsuccessful attempts to seek a correction”. The pair also supplied documentary evidence to back the complaint.

The ECU has subsequently found that the July broadcast had failed to give “due weight to public statements by successive Popes or the efforts made on the instructions of Pius XII to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution, and perpetuated a view which is at odds with the balance of evidence.”

In an online blog dealing with his complaint, Lord Alton has written: “Ironically, part of the BBC report came from St Maximilian Kolbe’s cell at Auschwitz. St Maximilian, was executed after taking the place of another prisoner. He had been arrested for publishing a denunciation of the Nazis in his magazine, Knight, which had a circulation of around one million people. Hardly silence, then.”

Lord Alton concludes: “One charitable interpretation of the Auschwitz report was that it was a sloppy, lazy, throw-away remark -

indicative of the sort of religious illiteracy that can cause so much offence; and part of a blurring between the straightforward reporting of news and the desire to add some melodrama to spice it up. Don't let facts or truth spoil a good story.

“Less charitably, the BBC report may be seen as the simply latest example of a long running attempt to rewrite history.”

News briefs

+++ Rev David Neilands - The death took place earlier this week of the Rev David Neilands, chaplain of Methodist College Belfast and husband of Lynda, the Senior Editor of the Methodist Newsletter and Assistant Editor of the Church of Ireland Gazette. Mr. Neillands is survived by Lynda, two sons Christopher and Patrick; daughter-in-law Stephanie; and his mother, Sally.

+++ The Carnation Inn - St Christopher's, Mersey Street, Belfast, recently held a Christmas event with a nativity called The Carnation Inn, a newly written nativity that includes the whole congregation. Hannah, the inn keeper invites angels, shepherds, wise men, animals and

everyone else to come into the inn for breakfast and give Mary, Joseph and baby a bit of peace and quiet. After breakfast Hannah re-tells the story of the night before, involving different groups who tell their version of how it affected them. Hannah then supplies coffee and mince pies before they all head back to the mountains, to heaven...

+++ Christingle at Ballysillan - 'Pheobe,' aka Connor Children's Officer Jill Hamilton, attended St Mark's Parish Church, Ballysillan, to help explain the Christingle message. There was a great turnout of families and children for this service. The Rev Campbell Dixon, said: "Phoebe' certainly made a BIG impression at St Mark's and Jill got the message across in her captivating presentation. "We all appreciate Jill's ministry and willingness to participate in our service."

+++ Attack foiled on Melbourne's Anglican Cathedral - Police and security services in Australia say that they have foiled a Christmas Day terror attack that had been planned against Melbourne's Anglican Cathedral. In a joint operation involving more than 400 heavily armed officers, the Australian Security Intelligence

Organisation (ASIO), the Australian Federal Police and Victorian State Police arrested six men and one woman as they executed five warrants in the north of the city. The suspects range in age from 20- to 26-years-old.

+++ Future of New Zealand Cathedral uncertain - The future of the partially-demolished earthquake-ravaged cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand, remains uncertain after an expected pre-Christmas announcement was delayed. Cathedral and diocesan officials had wanted to demolish the remains of the building, which was severely damaged in the 2011 earthquake, and build a new cathedral. But a series of legal and political challenges followed from opponents who are pushing for the previous building to be effectively restored.